

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 667

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

DIA WASHDC

USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

AMCONGEN MILAN

AMCONGEN NAPLES

US DOCOSOUTH

SHAPEUSNR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 17142

US DOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF

SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: BERLINGUER OPENS CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING

SUMMARY. ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) SECRETARY GENERAL
ENRICO BERLINGUER OCTOBER 18 OPENED AN URGENTLY CONVENED
CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING WITH A CAUTIOUSLY WORDED ADDRESS.
BERLINGUER OBSERVED THAT CONDITIONS ARE NOT YET RIPE FOR
THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE, BUT HE SUGGESTED THAT NEW MEANS MUST
BE FOUND TO INVOLVE THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARITES (OF THE
SO-CALLED CONSTITUTIONAL ARC) IN THE DECISION-MAKING AND
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POLICY EXECUTION PROCESSES. HE CONFIRMED AND REITERATED THE

VALIDITY OF THE PCI'S CURRENT POLITICAL LINE, AND HE PUT THE PARTY ON GUARD AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD PUSH IT TO THE LEFT AND GIVE IN TO NOSTALGIA FOR THE PAST. WHILE BERLINGUER HAD LIMITED PRAISE FOR THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT, HE HAD STRONG CRITICISM FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) PARTY AS A WHOLE. IN THE PURELY ECONOMIC REALM, BERLINGUER LISTED THE PROBLEMS FACING THE COUNTRY, AND HE SUPPORTED THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION AND THE NEED FOR AUSTERITY MEASURES. THE SPEECH CONFIRMS OUR BELIEF THAT THE PARTY WILL ATTEMPT TO DEAL WITH THE CURRENT PROBLEMS IN ITS RANKS BY INCREASED PROPAGANDA AND EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS RATHER THAN TO RESORTING TO ANY SHIFTS IN THE POLCY LINE. END SUMMARY.

1. PCI SECRETARY GENERAL BERLINGUER OPENED AN URGENTLY CONVENED CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING OCTOBER 18 WITH A CAUTIOUSLY WORDED TWO-HOUR SPEECH ANALYZING THE ECONOMIC SITUATION CONFRONTING THE NATION AND SETTING FORTH THE POLITICAL GUIDELINES AND GOALS UNDER WHICH THE PARTY WOULD OPERATE IN THE PERIOD AHEAD. THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE UNTIL OCTOBER 20.

2. STRESSING THAT THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE REMAINS AT THE CORE OF THE PCI'S POLITICAL STRATEGY, BERLINGUER DID NOT WASTE WORD IN POINTING OUT THAT FOR OBJECTIVE REASONS THE TIME IS NOT YET RIPE FOR ITS FRUITION. IN THE ABSENCE OF THIS POSSIBILITY, BERLINGUER SUGGESTED THAT PROBLEMS NOW EXISTING ON THE POLITICAL SCENE (FOR THE PCI PRIMARILY) WOULD BE EASED IF NEW FORMULAS WERE FOUND FOR CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARITES WHICH ABSTAINED ON THE PARLIAMENTARY CONFIDENCE VOTES PERMITTING THE LATTER TO PARTICIPATE MORE DIRECTLY IN THE DECISION-MAKING AS WELL AS IN THE POLICY EXECUTION PROCESSES.

2. EXPECTEDLY, BERLINGUER STRESSED THE PCI'S WEIGHT ON THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE, AND HE NOTED THAT WITHOUT ITS REPONSIBLE APPRACH TO THE CRISIS NOW CONFRONTING THE COUNTRY, AN AUSTERITY PROGRAM

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WOULD LEAD TO NIL AND THE CUNTRY WULD FACE RUIN. THE CHALLENGE FOR THE PCI AT THIS JUNCTURE, ACCORDING TO BERLINGUER, IS HOW TO EXERCISE RESPONSIBILITY AND AT THE SAME TIME BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN THE STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY. THE TASK FACING THE PARTY, IN HIS WORDS, IS HOW TO WORK TOWARD THE PARTY'S OBJECTIVE IN A TIME OF SEVERE ECONOMIC CRISIS AND IN A PERIOD WHEN THE CONDITIONS HAVE NOT YET MATURED FOR THE FORMATION OF

A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY (HISTORIC COMPROMISE). WHILE THE PCI SHOULD WORK TO SPEED UP THE MATURATION PROCESS, BERLINGUER URGED CAUTION LEST PRECIPITOUS ACTIONS BE TAKEN WHICH COULD REVERSE THE POSTIVE TRENDS.

3. BERLINGUER IS QUICK TO NOTE THAT CONDITIONS HAVE, IN FACT, CHANGED SUBSTANTIALLY IN THE COUNTRY IN RECENT YEARS; THE PCI LAMENT, HOWEVER, IS THAT THESE CHANGES HAVE NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH. BERLINGUER HAD SOME KIND WORDS FOR THE CURRENT ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT "THE ACTUAL GOVERNMENT TO SOME EXTENT DISTINGUISHES ITSELF FROM PRECEDING ONES" BY DEMONSTRATING A CERTAIN MEASURE OF SERIOUSNESS AND BY A CERZIN RECEPTIVITY TO PROPOSALS ADVANCED BY POPULAR ORGANIZATIONS AND BY WORKING CLASS PARTIES. HOWEVER, BERLINGUER HAD SUBSTANTIALLY HARSHER WORDS FOR ANDREOTTI'S PARTY WHICH MUST BE SEEN, IN HIS WORDS, AS THE PRINCIPAL FORCE WORKING TO IPEDE THE FORMATION OF SOME TYPE OF UNITARY GOVERNMENT. (ON THE OTHER HAND HE PRAISES THE LOCIALIST AND THE REPUBLICANS FOR THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE IDEA OF A UNITARY GOVERNMENT.) HE ATTRIBUTES THE DC RESISTANCE TO CHANGE INTER ALIA TO ITS DESIRE TO KEEP ALL POWER IN ITS OWN HANDS, TO ITS INTERNAL DIVISIONS, AND TO ITS DREAMS THAT IT CAN RETURN TO OLD ALLIANCES BASED ON DIVISIONS IN THE WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT.

4. BERLINGUER STRONGLY REITERATED THE PARTY'S COMMITMENT TO ITS PRESENT LINE.

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AMCONGEN MILAN
AMCONGEN NAPLES
USDOCOSOUTH
SHAPEUSNR

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THE PCI MUST REMAIN VIGILANT AGAINST ATTEMPTS IN THE FORM OF CAMPAIGNS AND MANEUVERS OF ITS ADVERSARIES TO CAUSE THE PARTY TO SHIFT THE COURSE UPON WHICH IT HAS EMBARKED. IN PARTICULAR, AND THIS IS A POINT TO WHICH BERLINGUER ADDRESSED HIMSELF DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY AT SEVERAL POINTS, THE PCI MUST AVOID PRESSURE FROM THOSE GROUPS (READ PRIMARILY THE EXTREME LEFT AND THE SOCIALISTS) WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO TAKE POSITIONS TO THE LEFT OF THE PCI AND THEREFORE OBLIGE IT ALSO TO MOVE TO THE LEFT.

5. ON THE ECONOMIC FRONT, BERLINGUER LARGELY RECITED OLD THEMES, PARTICULARLY WHEN DISCUSSING THE CAUSES (RANGING FROM THE US DEVALUATION OF THE DOLLAR IN 1971 TO DC MISMANAGEMENT) FOR THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN WHICH ITALY FINDS ITSELF. HE EMPHATICALLY
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STATED THAT THE PCI POSITION HAS BEEN AND REMAINS FAVORABLE TO ADOPTING MEASURES TO COMBAT INFLATION SINCE IT, IN FACT, "HITS FIRST AND ALWAYS THE POOREST GROUPS AND THOSE LEAST PROTECTED."

6. FINALLY, IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT CORRIERE DELLA SERA OCTOBER 19 MENTIONS RUMORS THAT THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE WILL DECIDE SOME CHANGES IN THE PCI SECRETARIAT. THE TWO INDIVIDUALS MENTIONED AS POSSIBLY LEAVING THEIR PRESENT POSTS ARE PIERO PIERALLI, DEPUTY HEAD OF THE PARTY SECTION FOR ORGANIZATION, AND RENZO TRIVELLI, CHIEF OF THE PARTY SECTION FOR PRESS AND PROPAGANDA. BOTH WERE PROMOTED TO THESE POSTS AT THE 14TH PARTY CONGRESS HELD IN MARCH 1975.

7. COMMENT. JUDGING FROM HIS SPEECH, BERLINGUER CHOSE TO CONFRONT THE DILEMMA NOW CONFRONTING THE PARTY IN A CAUTIOUS MANNER. IN FACT, HE IMPLIES THAT THE PCI HAS NO REAL ALTERNATIVE AT THIS CRUCIAL JUNCTURE OTHER THAN TO EMBARK ON A RADICAL NEW

COURSE WHICH WOULD CARRY WITH IT THE RISK OF ALIENATING PART OF THE ELECTORATE WHICH SUPPORTED IT IN THE LAST ELECTION. BY CALLING FOR NEW FORMULAS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND EXECUTION OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES, BERLINGUER IS ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST A MINIMUM OF FORWARD MOMENTUM TOWARDS THE PARTY'S ULTIMATE GOAL OF A SHARE IN THE GOVERNING OF THE COUNTRY TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE PRESENTLY UNHAPPY BASE THAT THIS IS THE ONLY SURE WAY TOWARDS SUCCESS. BUT, AS HE SAID NEAR THE END OF HIS SPEECH, "CERTAINLY, THE PRESENT POSITION EXPOSES US TO RISKS." TO MINIMIZE THESE, THE PCI LEADERSHIP CAN BE EXPECTED TO REINFORCE ITS CONTACTS AND EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS AMONG THE BASE TO CONVINCE THEM OF THE CORRECTNESS OF THE LINE LAID DOWN BY THE HEADQUARTERS IN ROME.

8. IF THE REPORTS ABOUT THE DEPARTURE OF PIERALLI AND TRIVELLI TURN OUT TO BE TRUE, THEY WOULD BE THE SCAPEGOATS FOR WHAT THE LEADERSPLP FEELS TO BE FAILINGS IN THE ALL-IMPORTANT ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROPAGANDA SECTIONS. VOLPE

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